CHRIS JOHNSON WIN HIS FOURTH SLM FEATURE AT IRWINDALE SPEEDWAY

Race Date: September 9, 2006

by Tim Kennedy

Irwindale, CA., Sept. 9 - Chris Johnson, 23, won his fourth Lucas Oil Super Late Model 50-lap feature Saturday night on the Irwindale Speedway banked half-mile. He earned $1,250 in the No. 20 Speed Wong Racing 2004 Chevy Monte Carlo in SLM race 13 of 16 this season. It was his third consecutive series victory, including the twin features on August 19. The Claremont resident started second as second fastest qualifier and led all 50 circuits. He won by 0.721 over SLM point leader and three-time winner Van Knill, his 21-year old long-time racing buddy. Series rookie Johnson, the 2004-05 West Coast Pro Truck champion, moved to ninth in SLM points, despite missing five races in a philosophical difference of opinion with his car owner, Darryl Wong.

Four-caution flags following multi-car crashes resulted in three upset drivers and several cars with significant damage during the 38-minute event. Track management billed the evening "Truckers Night" and many working trucks, including lumber trucks, cement mixers, 18-wheelers paraded around the half-mile track before racing commenced with about 2,800 persons in the grandstand. Other feature winners were Greg Crutcher in Vista Paint Super Stocks and Austin Grabowski in a double-points, double-purse Legends event. Rick Crow won a pair of Justice Brothers Pure Stock races-a 20-lap run on the third-mile oval and a 10-lap, seven-car race on the Figure 8 course. John Watkinson took the Grand American Modified race, which officials reduced from a scheduled 20 laps to four laps. Only three of the four cars present came to the grid and just two cars started. Garreett Yamada trailed Watkinson by 3.161 seconds.

Fastest S/S qualifier Crutcher started his 1976 Camaro third in a 20-car field for the 12th race of the S/S season. He took the lead on lap five from six-time winner Bryan Harrell and beat Harrell by 0.289. The scheduled 30-lap race concluded after 28 laps because of a two-car crash in the first turn. Jeff Grill, in 11th position, spun and Steve Smith's Chevy Nova backed in Grill's car at speed. Grill complained of neck and back pain. Rescue workers cut the roof off his Camaro on the drivers' side to remove him safely. An ambulance took Grill to Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center for medical evaluation.

Pure Stock point leader Crow, driving his pink 1972 Chevelle, continued his series dominance by starting last (11th) in a 20-lap main on the third-mile oval. He was in second place by the ninth lap and took advantage of a lap 15 caution flag to cut into lap 5-15 leader John Mattie's 20-yard advantage. Crow made an inside pass entering turn one on lap 16 and led the final five laps. Mattie trailed by 0.384. Fastest qualifier Mark Whitson, the sixth starter, finished third, 0.412 back in his 1973 Chevy Malibu. Ron Davis led the first four laps from pole position in his 1974 Chevy Nova and finished sixth with seven of the 11-starters running at the finish.

Seven of the pure stocks returned for the final race of the night-a 10-lap Figure 8 all green-flag race that took 3:58.679. Crow also came from last starting spot and led all but the first two laps when outside front row driver Jeff Elder was in command. Mattie finished second and Harry Michaelian was third in his 1973 Plymouth Roadrunner. All seven drivers finished on the lead lap. Crow's winning margin was 2.581 seconds. The twin wins gave Crow six main event victories in a row, including two pure stock Figure 8 races. He now has nine feature triumphs this season in the series in 12 races that include four on the Figure 8 course.

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